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"And what rough beast its hour come round at last . . ."—*William Butler Yeats*

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Travelling South

by John Berryman

A red moon hung above the pines that night
Travelling, as we travelled, south. First one,
Then two streamers of cloud across the moon
Crept and trivided the cold brooding light
Like blood. The captive hum under the hood
Pacing, the pebbles plunging, the sick mind
Raced through the night, afraid of what we'd find
For brother at the end, sightless or dead.

The same womb bore us. What is the time of man?
At what time does he rise and go to bed?
When shall a young man put his hopeful head
Upon the block, under a red red moon,
And lose that dear head? I was dull with fear,
The car devoured the darkness, the moon hung,
Blood over the pines, and the cold wind sang
Welcome, welcome the executioner.

Halt then, the lighted house, the nurse, at last
Painfully but his real face, his hand
Moving, his voice to drown that ominous wind;
Trouble, but trouble that would soon be past;
Injury, but salvation. The headsman stood
Once at the block, looked on the young man there,
And let that young man rise. In the night air
The pines consumed the moon and the moon of blood.

Exercises In Perspective

Notes on the Uses of Coincidence in the Novels of E. M. Forster

by Hyatt Howe Waggoner

I

"Death," wrote E. M. Forster in *Howards End*, "destroys a man, but the idea of death saves him." The imaginative realization of death, that is, can clarify one's view of life. It can make the parts fall into a meaningful pattern; it can save one, sometimes, from the kind of blindness born of concentrated egoism that theologians have called the worst of the sins, pride.

Though Forster is not a professing Christian, and indeed has treated the representatives of the church with ironical amusement and has commented often on the failures of religion, his novels suggest an essentially religious view of life. They suggest the need of perspectives that will carry us beyond convention, beyond personal and individual instincts, desires, and ideas, beyond worldliness and subjectivity.

But this attitude of Forster's, though it forms a persistent thematic background, is never completely set forth in his fiction in the form of statement. His novels are, of course, "wise," but in them he never "sums up" any "philosophy." What may be called, perhaps without too great inaccuracy, his mystical naturalism emerges only as a totality of meaning,—complex, concrete, incapable of simple abstract statement. It emerges from the exercises in perspective that dominate the novels.

Since his technique is not that of the realist—and certainly not that of the naturalist—Forster does not attempt to present a

transcription of "life as it it"; he is never under the illusion that he is recording the thing in itself of experience, whatever that metaphysical entity may be. He knows that, like the process of perception on which it depends, art is an act of assertion. Working in a way closely allied to that of the symbolists in poetry, he writes novels which put into permanent form, that is, into the form of art, a part of his experience which to a degree did not exist before the act of creation began. He knows, as did Henry James, that in a very literal sense the novelist must be not only sensitive but creative; for the artist begins by cultivating awareness and ends by fashioning a segment of the world.

It is the distinction of Henry James not only that he strengthened the technical resources of the novelist but that he created a world of refined awareness within the general area of the already known. (The unknown, of course, lies both within and without the boundaries of the known.) He thought it the task of the novelist to be keenly aware of the subtle shadings in experience; and he succeeded magnificently in objectifying in fiction the movements of his refined sensibility. Yet if there is one outstanding limitation in most of the novels of Henry James it is that the rooms in which the characters talk so wittily and interestingly and analyze their emotions with such fine discrimination —that these rooms seldom have a *view*. The world of James' novels is ordinarily the drawing room, the salon, the library, a world of closed rooms. The mores of the social set, or of a segment of society, or, at most, of society as a whole, constitute the background and determine the perspectives.

James' stories are, perhaps, snapshots, or they are microscopic studies, or they are spectroscopic analyses in which values invisible to the eye are revealed by being passed through the prism of James' intelligence. But they are never aerial views. The lines of perspective seldom carry the eye beyond the social, perhaps never beyond the human. We are not made aware by James of the contours of the round earth itself, with all that such a setting implies for the conditions of human life.

E. M. Forster is not so fine a novelist as was Henry James—

neither so productive nor, probably, so gifted. Yet there is one respect in which Forster's equipment as a novelist seems to some of us to excel that of James: Forster not only knows but feels that the earth is round, that the light from the stars is reaching us even on the clearest day. It is not only in *A Room with a View* that he arranges perspectives for our contemplation. Forster's views are always more inclusive than those of James, his sense of the pressure of the dark on the light is greater, his awareness of the uncharted areas in which the known is embedded like a tiny chain of islands in a vast untravelled sea is stronger. This awareness of the universal backdrop, against which human activities must be seen if they are to be seen in undistorted perspective, is one of the chief elements that give distinction to Forster's novels. Forster writes brilliant comedies of manners, and he is a penetrating analyst of what lies deeper than manners, the universally human; but one of his finest gifts is his ability to carry us through the social comedy, through and beyond human nature, to the natural and the eternal. The lines in his pictures converge in a reality more ultimate than that which brings the eye to rest in the works of James.

II

Forster embodies the universal backdrop in his novels in various ways, several of which have been discussed at length and quite adequately by his critics. His habit—archaic, as some see it—of interrupting his action with analytical asides, his comments on his characters when he describes them, his inveterate irony, an irony both stylistic and basic, which allows him to see no motive unmixed and no conclusion final—all these and other aspects of his novels help the reader to glimpse *sub specie aeternitatis* the patterns of conflicting interests and points of view that make up the stories. But there is another way in which Forster enlarges our vision, and it has received too little penetrating comment. Forster uses the device of coincidence purposefully—and, it seems to me, despite the arguments of a number of critics

who consider this the weakest aspect of his work, effectively—to arrange perspectives.

It is mere coincidence, we often say, that it should have rained on the very day when we planned a picnic, and in such a dry month too. It is a mere coincidence that the tree should have fallen at just the moment when the car was passing below. But what do we mean by *coincidence?* That events are uncaused, unpredictable? That we live in a world of chance? To determine what we mean, or what we should mean, we must enter the realm of metaphysics, where Hume, Bergson, and Whitehead are better guides, however we may view their inadequacies, than any novelist. Yet the novelist, who works as an artist in the raw materials of judgment, may help us, by presenting aspects of experience which we are apt to forget or ignore, to think more clearly about such metaphysical problems. Both the artist and the scientist present the philosopher with data for synthesis. Because nothing that we experience, or may experience, is irrelevant for metaphysics, the novelist, though no substitute for the metaphysician, declares his philosophy, and perhaps its inadequacy, on every page that he writes. In the patterns of imagined experience that E. M. Forster presents in his novels, coincidence is significant both formally and philosophically. And form and content in literature must ultimately be studied integrally, for every artistic decision is also implicitly a moral and philosophical judgment.

Thus, for instance, the sudden deaths in Forster's novels, if they are viewed not as transcriptions of surprising events in life but as declarations of the artist's intention, assume a fresh importance. Their *suddenness* is largely a matter of presentation. They are frequently "sudden" because the novelist has not foreshadowed them, has, in fact, introduced them without preparation of any kind, as though he could assume that the reader would accept them without surprise as part of the natural order of things. When Mrs. Moore, for example, in *A Passage to India,* dies while journeying back to England through the intense heat, her death seems sudden to the reader but is not in fact either sudden or essentially a matter of chance, of coincidence. The apparently sud-

den and coincidental nature of it is a result of Forster's technique: the announcement to the reader comes unexpectedly in a fragment of trivial conversation. The death of the chief character occurs, that is, at a distance, under circumstances only partially made known to the reader; and it is announced with no emotion, in a situation completely lacking in dramatic "appropriateness." What from the social or the human points of view would have been a high point, probably the dramatic climax, in the book, has been played down until it assumes an importance comparable to that of human conversation in the caves, where all words, like all sounds of any kind, are echoed indistinguishably as a hollow booming.

And Forster has not had to resort to a romantic use of the improbable to achieve this perspective. He has pictured Mrs. Moore as old, in poor health, deeply depressed by her recent experiences. The season was a dangerous one for travellers of all but the most robust health. Perhaps we may even be justified in recalling, without pressing the point too hard, that the frequently mentioned ruddiness of Mrs. Moore's complexion may have indicated a condition that would make her more than usually liable to sunstroke or shock from intense heat.

But the point is not that the author has really made the death quite likely, however suddenly and casually he has introduced it into his narrative. It is rather quite the opposite: not that he has, in this instance, made death plausible, but that he has treated it as though it were a part of the natural course of things. Thus critics who draw careful distinctions between the "probable" and the "improbable" deaths in the novels are, it seems to me, missing part of the point: again, one should consider the deaths in context, as part of a pattern; and if one does so, one sees that all of them, from the death of Gino's baby in *Where Angels Fear to Tread* or of Rickie in *The Longest Journey* to the much more "likely" death of Mrs. Moore, have one thing in common. This feature common to all of them, this likeness in otherwise unlike circumstances, must constitute their significance as revelations of Forster's intention. And the feature which they share is the cas-

ualness of their presentation. They are sudden and shocking to the reader, and often to the other characters, but apparently not to Forster. Forster has naturalized death.

There is no need, I trust, to labor the point that Forster is not essentially misrepresenting life. All deaths except those due to lingering diseases or to senility are sudden to someone, to the deceased himself, to his friends and relatives, or to mere acquaintances, like Hamidullah and Fielding. Perhaps it is only because the secular liberalism of our times has carefully suppressed all awareness of death that we think of it as shocking, unusual, something to be excluded from our consciousness as not quite real. And if sometimes, as in the death of Gerald in *The Longest Journey,* Forster casually disposes of a character whose normal life-expectancy would be long, it is not, I think, that he has solved the problems of his novel too easily by having recourse to melodramatic coincidence but that he has deliberately focused our awareness on the intrusion of the unknown, the unpredictable, into our ordered and secure existence. The artist may legitimately consult other tables of probability than the actuarial.

But the order, the security, that the structure of the novels clearly suggests, is illusory. The artistic significance of the "coincidental" deaths in Forster is that they destroy the most carefully cherished illusion of our culture, the illusion of security. They imply that, despite the claims of those who pin their hope of salvation on the achievements of applied science or on politics or on social reform, we do not yet sufficiently control nature even to eliminate natural, to say nothing of moral, evil. Properly read, Forster's novels are disillusioning: they open up fissures in the structure of our secular faith, fissures through which we may glimpse the dark vistas that surround and contain our easy, well-lighted world of security through insurance policies and plans for post-war helicopters and television. They are as unkind—to shift the figure from the secular to the theological—to our illusion of salvation by works as they are to the opposite heresy of salvation by faith. They repeat, with many variations in many

keys, the theme of Eliot's *Four Quartets*: "Dark, dark, dark, they all go into the dark."

So the sudden deaths in the novels help to supply the *view* which Forster has insisted is so necessary. And both the deaths and the other coincidences—even such really unlikely occurrences as the meeting of Henry Wilcox and Jacky in *Howards End*—have another implication. They suggest the endless web of *connections*, a web which, as Forster has said all through his novels, not only actually exists but which it is to our advantage to recognize and understand. Thus the theme of *Howards End*, "only connect the prose and the passion," is also, broadly interpreted, a theme in all of the novels. But to see just how this is so, we must revert to the term *coincidence* and to the experience which it symbolizes.

We mean when we say that something is a coincidence that we are unaware of the causes that brought together two "events" —which are themselves the result of the co-incidence of many other events—to form, in their *co-incidence*, a third event. We mean that we are not ordinarily aware of the crossing of two such chains of causality and thus have no pat "explanation" (in terms of prior events) ready to apply to the phenomenon. We do not seriously mean to assert that anything happens "without cause," even though we leave a place in our metaphysic for moral responsibility. The chain of causes that produced, say, an unusual meeting of former acquaintances whose lives have become widely separated may be too complicated and obscure for us to trace. But there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy.

Forster's chance meetings and unexpected turns of fortune surprise us into awareness of the degree to which our lives hinge upon coincidence. Just as, in Conrad's *Secret Sharer*, there would have been no tale to tell had it not been for the coincidences, the original irrationalities, of the captain's strangeness to his vessel, his unusual decision to stand watch himself and dismiss his crew, the crew's oversight in leaving the ladder down—so it is equally coincidental that the Schlegels should have met Leonard Bast at

the concert, that they should have gone off by mistake with his umbrella, and that Leonard's wife, Jacky, should turn out to have been once Henry Wilcox's mistress. The last coincidence is not essentially different from the others, only more striking.

So in the famous handkerchief scene in *Othello* Shakespeare uses coincidence. It can be demonstrated that even without the episode Iago would have succeeded. Why then the handkerchief? At least one answer would be that the coincidence emphasizes the "inclusiveness" of the experience by giving Iago gratuitously, as it were, an extra dividend. Thus Shakespeare heightens the tragedy by introducing an element that takes us beyond the humanly controlled world. The fact that Shakespeare's plot does not depend upon the handkerchief episode to the extent that Forster's hinges upon Jacky's former connection with Henry Wilcox suggests only that Shakespeare has solved his problem with greater artistic finesse.

And it is by a series of comparable coincidences that one was born in America rather than in France or Malaya, white rather than black, normal rather than deformed; that one met and married this person rather than some other, that one was not killed by the speeding motorist. Our lives are involved in circumstances which are not only not under our control but of which for the most part we are entirely unaware. That there are causes of these circumstances we do not doubt, for we do not doubt the rationality of nature; but we do not know, nor can we ever find out, what all the causes are. Only when the unexpected fortune or misfortune jars us out of our routine do we become momentarily aware of the extent to which, though we are in some sense separate entities, personalities, souls, yet we are also foci of lines of coincidence. If it is easy, after realizing this truth, to espouse determinism or to dally with fatalism, it is not necessary to do so. Certainly Forster's novels never question the integrity of the individual, never cast any doubt on the reality of choice. But they do suggest the limitations within which choice is real.

Thus the coincidences in the novels help us to connect, to sense the interdependence of "matter" and "spirit," to see the

behavior of the barnyard creatures and of Margaret and Henry Wilcox as somehow responsive to the same laws, though not entirely reducible to those laws. By suggesting some of the conditions to which will is subject, the coincidences present in clearer perspective the reality of freedom within necessity. And if we are thus led to see effects in terms of their causes, behavior in terms of environment and temperament, we may better understand, though we may remain powerless to modify, the *divisions* that, according to Forster, play so important and so unfortunate a part in our lives. To oversimplify, for the moment, a novel almost as complex as life itself, we may say that Mrs. Moore and Azziz are drawn together by the glimpse which each has had of himself and of others in the perspective afforded by the caves. And if Ricky had been better able to perceive the connections of which Mrs. Moore became aware, he might have managed his life more satisfactorily.

One further word on the artistic implications of the coincidences. They are more "accidental" from some points of view than from others. They are "coincidences" in the popular sense of the term chiefly from the point of view of the person who is accustomed to equate what is unusual in his experience with the inexplicable or the uncaused, from the point of view of some of the characters in the novels who are too immersed in the immediate details of their lives to understand what does not concern their supper or their success, from the point of view of all who lack vision. Forster's novels are elaborate tissues of interwoven, contradictory, mutually modifying perspectives. The perspective of the unenlightened person, that of the social class, that of the redemptive character, of a Mrs. Moore or a Mr. Emerson or a Mrs. Wilcox—all these are presented in the novels and allowed to work on and against each other. What is a mere coincidence to Lucy is natural to Mr. Emerson.

It is natural to him because he is constantly aware of the backdrop of human life. He has a view. Thus, unlike the conventionalists, he is aware of the natural causes of things, of man's life as inseparable either temporally or spatially from the universal

process of which the stars and the quanta are as much a part as we. Where the Cuthbert Eagers see only disconnectedness, a world of spots and gaps in which all that might disturb their complacency or challenge their vanity has been relegated to the realm of the unnatural or the coincidental, where it may safely be ignored, he takes a longer and steadier look and stands ready to admit the reality of the disapproved and the disenchanting.

But if Forster's novels are thus naturalistic in their implication, they represent a type of naturalism very far indeed from the naive variety of the early practitioners of the form. If the novels suggest the dependence of ideals upon facts, they never make "facts" account for too much. One of the chief defects of such naturalists as Zola and Dreiser is that their philosophy was inadequate to experience. The world which they present for our inspection is nearly as unreal as the world in which Dr. Primrose suffered and was rewarded. For they labored under many illusions, chief of which we may abbreviate as the illusion of static materialism. (Zola's belief that physical science is essentially descriptive rather than essentially experimental is not the most damaging of his misconceptions; it is merely the most easily disproved.) Believing in a billiard ball world, and having no adequate notion of the necessary selectivity and ultimate subjectivity of art, they supposed that by describing painstakingly the details of their characters' physiques, their heredity, their experiences, they could fully account for them. Thus many naturalists have tended to write long, detailed, "unselective" chronicles of "fact," ruling out coincidence with the same assurance they exercised in deleting the spiritual. Dreiser's novels, for instance, declare on every page their author's intention of absolute objectivity and scientific probability. They once seemed daringly factual and concrete. But they are just as much illustrations of a doctrine, and of a doctrine that only imperfectly fits human experience, as the sentimental romances against which they were a reaction.

In contrast with this closed world built upon the fallacy of misplaced concreteness, in which the facts of physics are taken

to be more real than the facts of value, the world of Forster's novels is open and dynamic. It may be thought of as a *process* in the Whiteheadian sense, a process in which there are neither gaps in the tissue of connections nor easy mechanistic answers to complex questions.

III

Forster's coincidences represent just one aspect of the maturity that distinguishes his work. If they naturalize the strange, it is equally true to say that they enlarge the natural to include all the possibilities. If they seem at times to suggest that he is using the method of romance rather than that of realism, they also carry within them the suggestion that they are used in the interest of truth to life, not only general, abstract truth in the sense that Hawthorne's "Ethan Brand" is true to life, but concrete, particular truth as well. They suggest an outlook naturalistic without inadequate dogmas, idealistic without groundless illusions. There is a sense in which it is meaningful to say that both Forster's thought and his technique are romantic. But insofar as he is a romanticist he is only reasserting insights which are permanently valid. One can find in his work no tendency to "escape," no specious coloring, no blurring of distinctions essential to clear thinking. If his coincidences ally him with romantic thought and practice, they ally him no less clearly with modern relativism or, for that matter, with the seventeenth century's awareness of the skull beneath the skin.

It may still be true, of course, that he should have achieved his effects by some other means than the device of coincidence. Perhaps novelists should have nothing to do with the unusual and the unexpected, or, using them, should make them seem a part of the normal social pattern, so that they lose their wildness and become conventionalized. But whether or not they are effective for all his readers, Forster has woven his coincidences so completely into the structure of his novels that any tinkering with

them in the interest of "realism" would destroy the integrity, and so the meaning, of the novels themselves.

And if the coincidences are not always "probable," who is to make the authoritative decision as to what is probable? A banker's calculus of probabilities is apt to be very different from E. M. Forster's or W. H. Auden's and may exclude much that is very probable indeed. Or if some of Forster's coincidences seem rather too improbable, too arranged, even to a sensitive, enlightened, and disciplined mind, still there is, I think, no valid reason why an artist may not work improbabilities into his pattern if he does so responsibly. Only a narrowly conceived credo of realism or a confusion of the commercial literary product with art would forbid the writer this freedom. Forster is neither a naturalist in the tradition of Zola nor a realist in the tradition of Maugham, Galsworthy, or Bennett; and he is not, of course, a contemporary experimentalist in the line of Joyce and the others—though in some respects he has more in common with them than many contemporary traditional realists have. His ties are with Hardy and Conrad, perhaps even more with Meredith. He manipulates his material. But so, we recall, does every artist. The difference is that Forster manipulates consciously, freely, fully aware of what he is doing and what he intends to achieve, while many realists and naturalists manipulate unconsciously, selecting and emphasizing, creating a world the pattern and features of which are determined by their acceptance of doctrines which they do not understand. Of the two ways, Forster's, it seems to me, is the better, if only because we have recently had so much of the other.

With no illusion that he is merely transcribing actuality, fully aware of the complexities of art, Forster arranges evocative symbols in shapes that are acceptable to a mind that is equably aware of facts, of paradox, and of mystery. The use which he makes of coincidence is a significant part of his declaration of intention.

The Wall

by Jean-Paul Sartre

THEY pushed us into a large white room and my eyes began to blink because the light hurt them. Then I saw a table and four fellows seated at the table, civilians, looking at some papers. The other prisoners were herded together at one end and we were obliged to cross the entire room to join them. There were several I knew, and others who must have been foreigners. The two in front of me were blond with round heads. They looked alike. I imagine they were French. The smaller one kept pulling at his trousers, out of nervousness.

This lasted about three hours. I was dog-tired and my head was empty. But the room was well-heated, which struck me as rather agreeable; we had not stopped shivering for twenty-four hours. The guards led the prisoners one after the other in front of the table. Then the four fellows asked them their names and what they did. Most of the time that was all—or perhaps from time to time they would ask such questions as: "Did you help sabotage the munitions?" or "Where were you on the morning of the ninth and what were you doing?" They didn't even listen to the replies, or at least they didn't seem to. They just remained silent for a moment and looked straight ahead, then they began to write. They asked Tom if it was true he had served in the International Brigade. Tom couldn't say he hadn't because of the papers they had found in his jacket. They didn't ask Juan anything, but after he told them his name, they wrote for a long while.

"It's my brother José who's the anarchist," Juan said. "You

know perfectly well he's not here now. I don't belong to any party, I never did take part in politics." They didn't answer.

Then Juan said: "I didn't do anything. And I'm not going to pay for what the others did."

His lips were trembling. A guard told him to stop talking and led him away. It was my turn.

"Your name is Pablo Ibbieta?"

I said yes.

The fellow looked at his papers and said: "Where is Ramon Gris?"

"I don't know."

"You hid him in your house from the sixth to the nineteenth."

"I did not."

They continued to write for a moment and the guards led me away. In the hall Tom and Juan were waiting between two guards. We started walking. Tom asked one of the guards: "What's the idea?" "How do you mean?" the guard asked. "Was that just the preliminary questioning, or was that the trial?" "That was the trial," the guard said. "So now what? What are they going to do with us?" The guard answered drily: "The verdict will be told you in your cell."

In reality, our cell was one of the cellars of the hospital. It was terribly cold there because it was very drafty. We had been shivering all night long and it had hardly been any better during the day. I had spent the preceding five days in a cellar in the archbishop's palace, a sort of dungeon that must have dated back to the Middle Ages. There were lots of prisoners and not much room, so they housed them just anywhere. But I was not homesick for my dungeon. I hadn't been cold there, but I had been alone, and that gets to be irritating. In the cellar I had company. Juan didn't say a word; he was afraid, and besides he was too young to have anything to say. But Tom was a good talker and knew Spanish well.

In the cellar there were a bench and four straw mattresses. When they led us back we sat down and waited in silence. After a while Tom said, "Our goose is cooked."

"I think so too," I said. "But I don't believe they'll do anything to the kid."

Tom said: "They haven't got anything on him. He's the brother of a fellow who's fighting, and that's all."

I looked at Juan. He didn't seem to have heard.

Tom continued. "You know what they do in Saragossa? They lay the guys across the road and then they drive over them with trucks. It was a Moroccan deserter who told us that. They say it's to save ammunition."

I said, "Well, it doesn't save gasoline."

I was irritated with Tom; he shouldn't have said that.

He went on. "There are officers walking up and down the roads with their hands in their pockets, smoking, and they see that it's done right. Do you think they'd put'em out of their misery? Like hell they do. They just let 'em holler. Sometimes as long as an hour. The Moroccan said the first time he almost puked."

"I don't believe they do that here," I said. "Unless they really are short of ammunition."

The daylight came in through four air-vents and a round opening that had been cut in the ceiling, to the left, and which opened directly onto the sky. It was through this hole, which was ordinarily closed by means of a trap-door, that they unloaded coal into the cellar. Directly under the hole there was a big pile of coal-dust; it had been intended for heating the hospital, but at the beginning of the war they had evacuated the patients and the coal had stayed there unused; it even got rained on from time to time, when they forgot to close the trap-door.

Tom started to shiver. "God damn it," he said. "I'm shivering. There it is starting again."

He rose and began to do gymnastic exercises. At each movement, his shirt opened and showed his white, hairy chest. He lay down on his back, lifted his legs in the air and began to do the scissors movement. I watched his big buttocks tremble. Tom was tough, but he had too much fat on him. I kept thinking that soon bullets and bayonet points would sink into that mass of tender

flesh as into a pat of butter. It didn't have the same effect on me as if he had been thin.

I wasn't exactly cold but I couldn't feel either my shoulders or my arms. From time to time, I had the impression that something was missing and I began to look around for my jacket. Then I would suddenly remember they hadn't given me a jacket. It was rather awkward. They had taken our clothes to give them to their own soldiers and had left us only our shirts and these cotton trousers the hospital patients wore in mid-summer. After a moment Tom got up and sat down beside me, breathless.

"Did you get warmed up?"

"God damn it, no. But I'm all out of breath."

Around eight o'clock in the evening, a major came in with two Phalangists. He had a sheet of paper in his hand.

"What are the names of those three over there?" he asked the guard.

"Steinbock, Ibbieta and Mirbal," said the guard.

The Major put on his glasses and examined his list.

"Steinbock . . . Steinbock . . . Here it is. You are condemned to death. You'll be shot tomorrow morning."

He looked at his list again.

"The other two also," he said.

"That's not possible," said Juan. "Not me."

The Major looked at him with surprise. "What's your name?"

"Juan Mirbal."

"Well, your name is here," said the Major, "and you're condemned to death."

"I didn't do anything," said Juan.

The Major shrugged his shoulders and turned towards Tom and me.

"You are both Basque?"

"No, nobody's Basque."

He appeared exasperated.

"I was told there were three Basques. I'm not going to waste my time running after them. I suppose you don't want a priest?"

We didn't even answer.

Then he said, "A Belgian doctor will be around in a little while. He has permission to stay with you all night."

He gave a military salute, and left.

"What did I tell you," Tom said. "We're in for something swell."

"Yes," I said. "It's a damned shame for the kid."

I said that to be fair, but I really didn't like the kid. His face was too refined and it was disfigured by fear and suffering which had twisted all his features. Three days ago, he was just a kid with a kind of affected manner some people like. But now he looked like an aging fairy, and I thought to myself he would never be young again, even if they let him go. It wouldn't have been a bad thing to show him a little pity, but pity makes me sick, and besides, I couldn't stand him. He hadn't said anything more, but he had turned grey. His face and hands were grey. He sat down again and stared, round-eyed, at the ground. Tom was good-hearted and tried to take him by the arm, but the kid drew himself away violently and made an ugly face. "Leave him alone," I said quietly. "Can't you see he's going to start to bawl?" Tom obeyed regretfully; he would have liked to console the kid; that would have kept him occupied and he wouldn't have been tempted to think about himself. But it got on my nerves. I had never thought about death, for the reason that the question had never come up. But now it had come up and there was nothing else to do but to think about it.

Tom started talking. "Say, did you ever bump anybody off?" he asked me. I didn't answer. He started to explain to me that he had bumped off six fellows since August. He hadn't yet realized what we were in for and I saw clearly he didn't *want* to realize it. I myself hadn't quite taken it in. I wondered if it hurt very much, I thought about the bullets, I imagined their fiery hail going through my body. All that was beside the real question; but I was calm, we had all night to realize it. After a while Tom stopped talking and I looked at him out of the corner of my eye. I saw that he too had turned grey and that he looked pretty miserable. I said to myself, "It's starting." It was almost dark, a

dull light filtered through the air-vents across the coal-pile and made a big spot under the sky; through the hole in the ceiling I could already see a star. The night was going to be clear and cold.

The door opened and two guards entered. They were followed by a blond man in a tan uniform. He greeted us.

"I'm the doctor," he said. "I've been authorized to give you any assistance you may require in these painful circumstances."

He had an agreeable, cultivated voice.

I said to him: "What are you going to do here?"

"Whatever you want me to do. I shall do everything in my power to lighten these few hours."

"Why did you come to us? There are lots of others, the hospital's full of them."

"I was sent here," he answered vaguely. "You'd probably like to smoke, wouldn't you?" he added suddenly. "I've got some cigarettes and even some cigars."

He passed around some English cigarettes and some *puros*, but we refused them. I looked him straight in the eye and he appeared uncomfortable.

"You didn't come here out of compassion," I said to him. "In fact, I know who you are. I saw you with some fascists in the barracks yard the day I was arrested."

I was about to continue, when all at once something happened to me which surprised me: the presence of this doctor had suddenly ceased to interest me. Usually, when I've got hold of a man, I don't let go. But somehow the desire to speak had left me; I shrugged my shoulders and turned away. A little later, I looked up and saw he was watching me with an air of curiosity. The guards had sat down on one of the mattresses. Pedro, the tall thin one, was twiddling his thumbs, while the other one shook his head occasionally to keep from falling asleep.

"Do you want some light?" Pedro suddenly asked the doctor. The latter nodded, "Yes." I think he had about the intelligence of a log, but doubtless he was not malicious. As I looked at his big cold, blue eyes, it seemed to me the worst thing about him

was his lack of imagination. Pedro went out and came back with an oil lamp which he set on the corner of the bench. It gave poor light, but it was better than nothing; the night before we had been left in the dark. For a long while I stared at the circle of light the lamp threw on the ceiling. I was fascinated. Then, suddenly, I came to, the light circle paled, and I felt as if I were being crushed under an enormous weight. It wasn't the thought of death, and it wasn't fear; it was something anonymous. My cheeks were burning hot and my head ached.

I roused myself and looked at my two companions. Tom had his head in his hands and only the fat, white nape of his neck was visible. Juan was by far the worst off; his mouth was wide open and his nostrils were trembling. The doctor came over to him and touched him on the shoulder, as though to comfort him; but his eyes remained cold. Then I saw the Belgian slide his hand furtively down Juan's arm to his wrist. Juan let himself be handled with indifference. Then, as though absent-mindedly, the Belgian laid three fingers over his wrist; at the same time, he drew away somewhat and managed to turn his back to me. But I leaned over backwards and saw him take out his watch and look at it for a moment before relinquishing the boy's wrist. After a moment, he let the inert hand fall and went and leaned against the wall. Then, as if he had suddenly remembered something very important that had to be noted down immediately, he took a note-book from his pocket and wrote a few lines in it. "The son-of-a-bitch!" I thought angrily. "He better not come and feel my pulse. I'll give him a punch in his dirty jaw."

He didn't come near me, but I felt he was looking at me. I raised my head and looked back at him. In an impersonal voice he said, "Don't you think it's frightfully cold here?"

He looked purple with cold.

"I'm not cold," I answered him.

He kept looking at me, with a hard expression. Suddenly I understood, and I lifted my hands to my face; I was covered with sweat. Here in this cellar, in mid-winter, right in a draft, I was sweating. I ran my fingers through my hair which was stiff with

sweat; at the same time, I realized my shirt was damp and sticking to my skin. I had been streaming with perspiration for an hour, at least, and had felt nothing. But this fact hadn't escaped that Belgian swine; he had seen the drops rolling down my face and had said to himself that it showed an almost pathological terror; and he himself had felt normal and proud of it because he was cold. I wanted to get up and go punch his face in but I had hardly started to make a move before my shame and anger had disappeared. I dropped back onto the bench with indifference.

I was content to rub my neck with my handkerchief because now I felt the sweat dripping from my hair onto the nape of my neck and that was disagreeable. I soon gave up rubbing myself, however, for it didn't do any good; my handkerchief was already wringing wet and I was still sweating. My buttocks, too, were sweating and my damp trousers stuck to the bench.

Suddenly Juan said, "You're a doctor, aren't you?"

"Yes," said the Belgian.

"Do people suffer . . . very long?"

"Oh! When . . . ? No, no," said the Belgian, in a paternal voice, "it's quickly over."

His manner was as reassuring as if he had been answering a paying patient.

"But I . . . somebody told me . . . they often have to fire two volleys."

"Sometimes," said the Belgian, raising his head. "It just happens that the first volley doesn't hit any of the vital organs."

"So then they have to re-load their guns and aim all over again?" He thought for a moment, then added hoarsely, "But that takes time!"

He was terribly afraid of suffering, he couldn't think about anything else, but that went with his age. As for me, I hardly thought about it any more and it certainly was not fear of suffering that made me perspire.

I rose and walked toward the pile of coal-dust. Tom gave a start and looked at me with a look of hate; I irritated him because my shoes squeaked. I wondered if my face was as putty-

colored as his. Then I noticed that he, too, was sweating. The sky was magnificent, no light at all came into our dark corner and I had only to lift my head to see the Big Bear. But it didn't look the way it had looked before. Two days ago, from my cell in the archbishop's palace, I could see a big patch of sky and each hour of the day brought back a different memory. In the morning, when the sky was a deep blue, and light, I thought of beaches along the Atlantic; at noon, I could see the sun, and I remembered a bar in Seville where I used to drink manzanilla and eat anchovies and olives; in the afternoon, I was in the shade, and I thought of the deep shadow which covers half of the arena while the other half gleams in the sunlight; it really gave me a pang to see the whole earth reflected in the sky like that. Now, however, no matter how much I looked up in the air, the sky no longer recalled anything. I liked it better that way. I came back and sat down next to Tom. There was a long silence.

Then Tom began to talk, in a low voice. He had to keep talking, otherwise he lost his way in his own thoughts. I believe he was talking to me, but he didn't look at me. No doubt he was afraid to look at me, as I was grey and sweating; we were both alike and worse than mirrors for each other. He looked at the Belgian, the only one who was alive.

"Say, do you understand? I don't."

Then I too began to talk in a low voice. I was watching the Belgian.

"Understand what? What's the matter?"

"Something's going to happen to us that I don't understand."

There was a strange odor about Tom. It seemed to me that I was more sensitive to odors than ordinarily. With a sneer I said, "You'll understand, later."

"That's not so sure," he said stubbornly. "I'm willing to be courageous, but at least I ought to know . . . Listen, they're going to take us out into the courtyard. Alright. The fellows will be standing in line in front of us. How many of them will there be?"

"Oh, I don't know. Five, or eight. Not more."

"That's enough. Let's say there'll be eight of them. Somebody

will shout 'shoulder arms' and I'll see all eight rifles aimed at me. I'm sure I'm going to feel like going through the wall; I'll push against the wall as hard as I can with my back, and the wall won't give in, the way it is in a nightmare. I can imagine all that. Ah! if you only knew how well I can imagine it!"

"Skip it!" I said. "I can imagine it too."

"It must hurt like the devil. You know they aim at your eyes and mouth so as to disfigure you," he added maliciously. "I can feel the wounds already; for the last hour I've been having pains in my head and neck. Not real pains; its worse still. They're the pains I'll feel tomorrow morning. And after that, then what?"

I understood perfectly well what he meant, but I didn't want to seem to understand. As for the pains, I, too, felt them all through my body, like a lot of little gashes. I couldn't get used to them, but I was like him, I didn't think they were important.

"After that," I said roughly, "you'll be eating daisies."

He started talking to himself, not taking his eyes off the Belgian, who didn't seem to be listening to him. I knew what he had come for, and that what we were thinking didn't interest him; he had come to look at our bodies, our bodies which were dying alive.

"It's like in a nightmare," said Tom. "You want to think of something, you keep having the impression you've got it, that you're going to understand, and then it slips away from you, it eludes you and it's gone again. I say to myself: afterwards, there won't be anything. But I don't really understand what that means. There are moments when I almost do . . . and then it's gone again. I start thinking of the pains, the bullets, the noise of the shooting. I am a materialist, I swear it; and I'm not going crazy, either. But there's something wrong. I see my own corpse. That's not hard, but it's *I* who see it, with *my* eyes. I'll have to get to the point where I think . . . where I think I won't see anything more, I won't hear anything more and the world will go on for the others. We're not made to think that way, Pablo. Believe me; I've already stayed awake all night waiting for something. But this is not the same thing. This will grab us from behind, Pablo, and we won't be ready for it."

"Shut up," I said. "Do you want me to call a father confessor?"

He didn't answer. I had already noticed that he had a tendency to prophesy and call me "Pablo" in a kind of pale voice. I didn't like that very much, but it seems all the Irish are like that. I had a vague impression that he smelt of urine. In reality I didn't like Tom very much and I didn't see why, just because we were going to die together, I should like him any better. There are certain fellows with whom it would be different; with Ramon Gris, for instance. But between Tom and Juan I felt alone. In fact, I liked it better that way. With Ramon I might have grown soft. But I felt terribly hard at that moment, and I wanted to stay hard.

He kept on muttering, in an absent-minded sort of way. He was certainly talking to keep from thinking. He smelt to high heaven of urine, like an old prostate patient. Naturally, I agreed with him, and I could have said everything he was saying: it's not *natural* to die. And since I was going to die, nothing seemed natural any more; neither the coal-pile, nor the bench, nor Pedro's dirty old mug. Only it was disagreeable for me to think the same things Tom thought. And I knew perfectly well that all night long, within five minutes of each other, we would keep on thinking things at the same time, sweating or shivering at the same time. I looked at him from the side and, for the first time, he seemed strange to me: he had death written on his face. My pride was wounded. For twenty-four hours I had lived side by side with Tom, I had listened to him, I had talked to him, and I knew we had nothing in common. And now we were as alike as twin brothers, simply because we were going to kick the bucket together. Tom took my hand without looking at me.

"Pablo; I wonder . . . I wonder if it's really true that we just cease to exist."

I drew my hand away.

"Look between your feet, you dirty dog."

There was a puddle of water between his feet and water was dripping from his trousers.

"What's the matter?" he said, frightened.

"You're wetting your pants," I said to him.

"It's not true," he said furiously. "I can't be pissing, I don't feel anything."

The Belgian had come closer to him. With an air of false concern, he asked: "Aren't you feeling well?"

Tom didn't answer. The Belgian looked at the puddle without comment.

"I don't know what that is," Tom said savagely, "but I'm not afraid. I swear to you, I'm not afraid."

The Belgian made no answer. Tom rose and went and urinated in the corner. He came back butttoning his fly, and sat down without a word. The Belgian was taking notes.

We were watching him; Juan was watching him too; all three of us were watching him, because he was alive. He had the gestures of a living person, the interests of a living person; he was shivering in this cellar the way living people shiver; he had an obedient, well-fed body. We, on the other hand, didn't feel our bodies any more—not the same way, in any case. I felt like touching my trousers, between my legs, but I didn't dare to. I looked at the Belgian, well-planted on his two legs, master of his muscles—and able to plan for tomorrow. We were there like three shadows deprived of blood; we were watching him and sucking his life like vampires.

Finally he came over to Juan. Was he going to lay his hand on the nape of Juan's neck for some professional reason, or had he obeyed a charitable impulse? If he had acted out of charity, it was the one and only time during the whole night. He fondled Juan's head and the nape of his neck. The kid let him do it, without taking his eyes off him, then, suddenly, he took hold of the doctor's hand and looked at it in a funny way. He held the Belgian's hand between his own two hands and there was nothing pleasing about them, those two grey paws squeezing that fat red one. I sensed what was going to happen and Tom must have sensed it too. But all the Belgian saw was emotion, and he smiled paternally. After a moment the kid lifted the big red paw to his mouth and started to bite it. The Belgian drew back quickly and stumbled towards the wall. For a second he looked at us with

horror; he must have suddenly understood that we were not men like himself. I began to laugh and one of the guards started up. The other had fallen asleep with his eyes wide open, showing only the whites.

I felt tired and over-excited at the same time. I didn't want to think any more about what was going to happen at dawn, about death. It didn't make sense and I never got beyond just words, or emptiness. But whenever I tried to think about something else I saw the barrels of rifles aimed at me. I must have lived through my execution twenty times in succession; one time I thought it was the real thing; I must have dozed off for a moment. They were dragging me toward the wall and I was resisting; I was imploring their pardon. I waked with a start and looked at the Belgian; I was afraid I had cried out in my sleep. But he was smoothing his moustache, he hadn't noticed anything. If I had wanted to, I believe I could have slept for a while. I had been awake for the last forty-eight hours, and I was worn out. But I didn't want to lose two hours of life; they would have had to come and wake me at dawn, I would have followed them drunk with sleep and I would have gone off without so much as a "gosh." I didn't want it that way, I didn't want to die like an animal. I wanted to understand. Besides, I was afraid of having nightmares. I got up and began to walk up and down and, so as to think about something else, I began to think about my past life. Memories crowded in on me, helter-skelter. Some were good and some were bad —at least that was how I had thought of them *before*. There were faces and happenings. I saw the face of a little *novilero* who had gottten himself horned during the *Feria* in Valencia. I saw the face of one of my uncles, of Ramon Gris. I remembered all kinds of things that had happened: how I had been on strike for three months in 1926, and had almost died of hunger. I recalled a night I had spent on a bench in Granada; I hadn't eaten for three days, I was nearly wild, I didn't want to throw up the sponge. I had to smile. With what eagerness I had run after happiness and women and liberty. And to what end? I had wanted to liberate Spain, I admired Pi y Margall, I had belonged to

the anarchist movement, I had spoken at public meetings. I had taken everything as seriously as if I had been immortal.

At that time I had the impression that I had my whole life before me, and I thought to myself: "It's all a God-damned lie." Now it wasn't worth anything because it was finished. I wondered how I had ever been able to go out and have a good time with girls. I wouldn't have lifted my little finger if I had ever imagined that I would die like this. I saw my life before me, finished, closed, like a bag, and yet what was inside was not finished. For a moment I tried to appraise it. I would have liked to say to myself: it's been a good life. But it couldn't be appraised, it was only an outline; I had spent my time writing checks on eternity, and had understood nothing. Now, I didn't miss anything. There were a lot of things I might have missed; the taste of manzanilla, for instance, or the swims I used to take in summer in a little creek near Cadiz. But death had taken the charm out of everything.

Suddenly the Belgian had a wonderful idea.

"My friends," he said to us, "if you want me to—and providing the military authorities give their consent— I could undertake to deliver a word or some token from you to your loved ones . . ."

Tom growled: "I haven't got anybody."

I didn't answer. Tom waited for a moment, then he looked at me with curiosity: "Aren't you going to send any message to Concha?"

"No."

I hated that sort of sentimental conspiracy. Of course, it was my fault, since I had mentioned Concha the night before, and I should have kept my mouth shut. I had been with her for a year. Even as late as last night, I would have cut my arm off with a hatchet just to see her again for five minutes. That was why I had mentioned her, I couldn't help it. Now I didn't care any more about seeing her; I hadn't anything more to say to her. I didn't even want to hold her in my arms; I loathed my body because it had turned grey and was sweating—and I wasn't even

sure that I didn't loathe hers too. Concha would cry when she heard about my death; for months she would have no more interest in life. But still it was I who was going to die. I thought of her beautiful, loving eyes. When she looked at me something went from her to me. But I thought to myself that it was all over; if she looked at me *now* her gaze would not leave her eyes, it would not reach out to me. I was alone.

Tom, too, was alone, but not in the same way. He was seated astride his chair and had begun to look at the bench with a sort of smile, with surprise, even. He reached out his hand and touched the wood cautiously, as though he were afraid of breaking something, then he drew his hand back hurriedly and shivered. I wouldn't have amused myself touching that bench, if I had been Tom; that was just some more Irish play-acting. But somehow it seemed to me too that the different objects had something odd about them; they seemed to have grown paler, less massive than before. I had only to look at the bench, the lamp or the pile of coal-dust to feel I was going to die. Naturally I couldn't think clearly about my death, but I saw it everywhere, even on the different objects, in the way they had withdrawn and kept their distance, tactfully, like people talking at the bedside of a dying person. It was his own death Tom had just touched on the bench.

In the state I was in, if they had come and told me I could go home quietly, that my life would be saved, it would have left me cold; a few hours or a few years of waiting is all the same, when you've lost the illusion of being eternal. Nothing mattered to me any more; in a way, I was calm. But it was a horrible kind of calm—because of my body. My body. I saw with its eyes and I heard with its ears, but it was no longer I; it sweated and trembled independently, and I didn't recognize it any longer. I was obliged to touch it and look at it to know what was happening to it, just as if it had been someone else's body. At times I still felt it, I felt a slipping, a sort of headlong plunging, as in a falling aeroplane, or else I heard my heart beating. But this didn't give me confidence; in fact, everything that came from my body had something damned dubious about it. Most of the time, it was si-

lent, it stayed put and I didn't feel anything other than a sort of heaviness, a loathsome presence against me; I had the impression of being bound to some enormous vermin. At one moment I touched my trousers and I felt they were damp; I didn't know whether they were wet with sweat or urine, but I went and pissed on the coal-pile, just as a precaution.

The Belgian took out his watch and looked at it.

"It's half-past three," he said.

The son-of-a-bitch! He must have done it on purpose. Tom jumped up. We hadn't yet realized the time was passing; the night surrounded us like a formless, dark mass; I didn't even remember it had started.

Juan started to shout. Wringing his hands, he implored: "I don't want to die, I don't want to die."

He ran the whole length of the cellar with his arms in the air, then he dropped down onto one of the mattresses, sobbing. Tom looked at him with dismal eyes and didn't even try to console him any more. The fact was, it was no use; the kid made more noise than we did, but he was less affected, really; he was like a sick person who defends himself against his malady with a high fever. When there's not even any fever left, it's much more serious.

He was crying. I could tell he felt sorry for himself, he was thinking about death. For one second, one single second, I too felt like crying, crying out of pity for myself. But just the contrary happened. I took one look at the kid, I saw his thin, sobbing shoulders and I felt I was inhuman. I couldn't feel pity either for these others or for myself. I said to myself: "I want to die decently."

Tom had gotten up and was standing just under the round opening looking out for the first signs of daylight. I was determined; I wanted to die decently, and I only thought about that. But underneath, ever since the doctor had told us the hour, I felt time slipping, flowing by, drop by drop.

It was still dark when I heard Tom's voice.

"Do you hear them?"

"Yes."

People were walking in the court-yard.

"What the hell are they doing? After all, they can't shoot in the dark."

After a moment we heard nothing more. I said to Tom: "There's the daylight."

Pedro got up yawning and came and blew out the lamp. He turned to the man beside him, "It's hellish cold."

The cellar had grown grey. We could hear shots at a distance.

"It's about to start," I said to Tom, "that must be in the back court-yard."

Tom asked the doctor to give him a cigarette. I didn't want any; I didn't want either cigarettes or alcohol. From that moment on, the shooting didn't stop.

"Can you realize it?" Tom said.

He started to add something, then he stopped and began to watch the door. The door opened and a lieutenant came in with four soldiers. Tom dropped his cigarette.

"Steinbock?"

Tom didn't answer. Pedro pointed him out.

"Juan Mirbal?"

"He's the one on the mattress."

"Stand up," said the lieutenant.

Juan didn't move. Two soldiers took hold of him by the armpits and stood him up on his feet. But as soon as they let go of him he fell down again.

The soldiers hesitated a moment.

"He's not the first one to get sick," said the lieutenant, "you'll have to carry him, the two of you; we'll arrange things when we get there." He turned to Tom: "Alright, come along."

Tom left between two soldiers. Two other soldiers followed, carrying the kid by his arms and legs. He was not unconscious; his eyes were wide open and tears were rolling down his cheeks. When I started to go out, the lieutenant stopped me.

"Are you Ibbieta?"

"Yes."

"You wait here. They'll come and get you later on."

They left. The Belgian and the two jailers left too, and I was alone. I didn't understand what had happened to me, but I would have liked it better if they had ended it all right away. I heard the volleys at almost regular intervals; at each one, I shuddered. I felt like howling and tearing my hair. But instead, I gritted my teeth and pushed my hands deep into my pockets, because I wanted to stay decent.

An hour later, they came to fetch me and took me up to the first floor in a little room which smelt of cigar smoke and was so hot it seemed to me suffocating. Here there were two officers sitting in comfortable chairs smoking, with papers spread out on their knees.

"Your name is Ibbieta?"

"Yes."

"Where is Ramon Gris?"

"I don't know."

The man who questioned me was small and stocky. He had hard eyes behind his glasses."

"Come nearer," he said to me.

I went nearer. He rose and took me by the arms, looking at me in a way calculated to make me go through the floor. At the same time he pinched my arms with all his might. He didn't mean to hurt me, it was quite a game; he wanted to dominate me. He also seemed to think it was necessary to blow his fetid breath into my face. We stood like that for a moment, only I felt more like laughing than anything else. It takes a lot more than that to intimidate a man who's about to die; it didn't work. He pushed me away violently and sat down again.

"It's your life or his," he said. "You'll be allowed to go free if you tell where he is."

After all, these two bedizened fellows with their riding-crops and boots were just men who were going to die one day. A little later than I, perhaps, but not a great deal. And there they were looking for names among their papers, running after other men in order to put them in prison or do away with them entirely.

They had their opinions on the future of Spain and on other subjects. Their petty activities seemed to me to be offensive and ludicrous; I could no longer put myself in their place, I had the impression they were crazy.

The little fat fellow kept looking at me, tapping his boots with his riding-crop. All his gestures were calculated to make him appear like a spirited, ferocious animal.

"Well? Do you understand?"

"I don't know where Gris is," I said. "I thought he was in Madrid."

The other officer lifted his pale hand indolently. This indolence was also calculated. I saw through all their little tricks and I was dumbfounded that men should still exist who took pleasure in that kind of thing.

"You have fifteen minutes to think it over," he said slowly. "Take him to the linen-room, and bring him back here in fifteen minutes. If he continues to refuse, he'll be executed at once."

They knew what they were doing. I had spent the night waiting. After that, they had made me wait an hour in the cellar, while they shot Tom and Juan, and now they locked me in the linen-room. They must have arranged the whole thing the night before. They figured that sooner or later people's nerves wear out and they hoped to get me that way.

They made a big mistake. In the linen-room I sat down on a ladder because I felt very weak, and I began to think things over. Not their proposition, however. Naturally I knew where Gris was; he was hiding at his cousin's house, about two miles outside of the city. I knew, too, that I would not reveal his hiding place, unless they tortured me (but they didn't seem to be considering that). All that was definitely settled and didn't interest me in the least. Only I would have liked to understand the reasons for my own conduct. I would rather have died than betray Gris. Why? I no longer liked Ramon Gris. My friendship for him had died shortly before dawn along with my love for Concha, along with my own desire to live. Of course I still admired him; he was hard. But it was not for that reason that I was willing to die in his

place; his life was no more valuable than mine; no life was of any value. A man was going to be stood up against a wall and fired at till he dropped dead; it didn't make any difference whether it was I or Gris or somebody else. I knew perfectly well he was more useful to the Spanish cause than I was, but I didn't give a God damn about Spain or anarchy, either; nothing had any importance now. And yet, there I was. I could save my skin by betraying Gris and I refused to do it. It seemed more ludicrous to me than anything else; it was stubbornness.

I thought to myself: "I certainly am hard-headed!" And I was seized with a strange sort of cheerfulness.

They came to fetch me and took me back to the two officers. A rat darted out under our feet and that amused me. I turned to one of the phalangists and said to him: "Did you see that rat?"

He made no reply. He was gloomy, and took himself very seriously. As for me, I felt like laughing, but I restrained myself because I was afraid that if I started, I wouldn't be able to stop. The phalangist wore mustaches. I kept after him, "You ought to cut off those mustaches, you jerk."

I was amused by the fact that he let hair grow all over his face while he was still alive. He gave me a kind of half-hearted kick and I shut up.

"Well," said the fat officer, "have you thought things over?"

I looked at them with curiosity, like insects of a very rare species.

"I know where he is," I said. "He's hiding in the cemetery. Either in one of the vaults or in the grave-diggers' shack."

I said that just to make fools of them. I wanted to see them get up and fasten their belts and bustle about giving orders.

They jumped to their feet.

"Fine. Moles, go ask Lieutenant Lopez for fifteen men. And as for you," the little fat fellow said to me, "if you've told the truth, I don't go back on my word. But you'll pay for this if you were pulling our leg."

They left noisily and I waited in peace, still guarded by the phalangists. From time to time I smiled at the thought of the

face they were going to make. I felt dull and malicious. I could see them lifting up the grave stones, or opening the doors of the vaults one by one. I saw the whole situation as though I were another person; the prisoner determined to play the hero, the solemn phalangists with their mustaches and the men in uniform running around among the graves. It was irresistibly funny.

After half an hour, the little fat fellow came back alone. I thought he had come to give the order to execute me. The others must have stayed in the cemetery.

The officer looked at me. He didn't look at all foolish.

"Take him out in the big courtyard with the others," he said. "When military operations are over, a regular tribunal will decide his case."

I thought I must have misunderstood.

"So they're not . . . they're not going to shoot me?" I asked.

"Not now, in any case. Afterwards, that doesn't concern me."

I still didn't understand.

"But why?" I said to him.

He shrugged his shoulders without replying and the soldiers led me away. In the big courtyard there were a hundred or so prisoners, women, children and a few old men. I started to walk around the grass-plot in the middle. I felt absolutely idiotic. At noon we were fed in the dining hall. Two or three fellows spoke to me. I must have known them, but I didn't answer. I didn't even know where I was.

Towards evening about ten new prisoners were pushed into the court-yard. I recognized Garcia, the baker.

He said to me, "Lucky dog. I didn't expect to find you alive."

"They condemned me to death," I said, "and then they changed their minds. I don't know why."

"I was arrested at two o'clock," Garcia said.

"What for?"

Garcia took no part in politics.

"I don't know," he said. "They arrest everybody who doesn't think the way they do."

He lowered his voice.

"They got Gris."

I began to tremble.

"When?"

"This morning. He acted like a damned fool. He left his cousin's house Tuesday because of a disagreement. There were any number of fellows who would have hidden him, but he didn't want to be indebted to anybody any more. He said: 'I would have hidden at Ibbieta's but, since they've got him, I'll go hide in the cemetery.' "

"In the cemetery?"

"Yes. It was the God damnedest thing. Naturally they passed by there this morning, that had to happen. They found him in the grave-diggers' shack. They opened fire at him and they finished him."

"In the cemetery!"

Everything went round in circles, and when I came to I was sitting on the ground; I laughed so hard the tears came to my eyes.

(Translated by Maria Jolas)

The Day's No Rounder than Its Angles Are

by Peter Viereck

Mere dark is not so night-like as it seems.
The night's more silken than the dark by far.
So many dark things are not night at all:
The cupboard where the cakes and poisons are;
The coffin where old men get locked in dreams
Alive, and no one hears their knocks and screams;
Shadows; and lightlessness of curtain's fall.

The night is further than the dark is far.
The night is farness, farnesses that reel.
The day is nearness, nearnesses that jar.
The day's no rounder than its angles are.
But though its angles gash you with a wound
Invisible, each night is soft and round.

The night is softer than the dark is satin.
The night is softness, softnesses that heal
The many, many gashes where you bled.
The day is loudness, loudnesses that threaten;
An evil sexton-dwarf hides in your head.
Oh where escape his bells that peal and peal?

The night is stiller than the dark is dead.

Love Poem

by Peter Viereck

We are the satraps of a sinking season.
Our Year's a Ferris wheel, whose guests we are.
Before I rise again, I must fall far.

But not with you. Our snow-time aches with treason,
At wheel's deep dip when soil gapes nearest bone.
Then you'll stand up, force doors, fall out alone.

New Guinea, 1944

by Roger Shattuck

This struggle proffers us the titles of the world.
A million pins follow the war across a million maps,
A rash which irritates the globe—
But here within the puncture it is more than name or place.

The lines of these mountains never cease;
They boldly pedestal the clouds
Whose upward turmoil only night can still,
They flow more softly downwards to the Marquham plain
And start a long, conducted wandering to the sea.
By night a wheel of fire,
The witching circle of an unlocated race,
Grows bickering beneath us in the tinder grass.
The morning shows a dull, charred scar
Where yonder giant from behind the hill
Unwittingly stubbed out his great cigar.

And on the floor
The rubbish of a desperate picnic
Will soon be overgrown.

Flight of the Children

by Cecil Hemley

From Corbeyville to Mount Laison
The train pursued an upward grade.
Like clustered grapes the children sat
Within the pullman undismayed.

From Mount Laison to Bar La Manche
The mountains rushed to level plains.
The children saw the steady black
Destroyed by red and yellow stains.

At Bar La Manche they found the sea,
And sunrise on the eastern tip
Disclosed the agony of death
In sinking of a merchant ship.

The sunset of the second day
The flaming planes came overhead
And played cantatas in the sky
With throated instruments of lead.

The wail of children in the train
Evoked antiphonal sound of shells,
And bursts of white against the red
Gardened the sky with asphodels.

At length they came to Gare du Coeur
To where the dignitaries stood.
But though they moved on live-white legs
Their minds had turned to steel and wood.

IV. The Other Landscape

An Essay on the Author of *Le Grand Meaulnes*

by Fredrika Blair

Note: This is the fourth in a series of articles dealing with European writers who are less well known here than they deserve to be.

Thirty years ago, Henri Alain-Fournier was killed on the battlefields of France,—presumed killed, rather, for his body was never found. He was twenty-eight years old, and his early death cut short a career which was already more than "promising" though he had only published one book. This was the novel *Le Grand Meaulnes*, in English called *The Wanderer*. He had also written some poems and short stories, later to appear under the title *Miracles*,* and had begun work on a second novel, *Colombe Blanchet*. But it is on his first book that his reputation rests. Though slow in obtaining popularity in France, from the first *Le Grand Meaulnes* deeply impressed such critics as Julien Benda, Edmond Jaloux, and the poet Charles Péguy, and by 1929 it had run into sixty-nine editions. In this country it has fared less well: *The Wanderer*, with an introduction by Havelock Ellis, is now out of print.

Le Grand Meaulnes is the story of the strange adventure which begins when the student Augustin Meaulnes borrows a horse and wagon without permission, and drives off to the station

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* *Miracles* contains Fournier's early works, and has a foreword by Fournier's close friend, Jacques Rivière. Rivière, who was later to become the editor of *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, as well as Fournier's brother-in-law, met him when they were students at the Lycée Lakanal. Their friendship, continuing through their years of military service until Fournier's death, gave rise to a voluminous correspondence, and it is this correspondence, with Rivière's preface, which forms our best source of information about the author of *Le Grand Meaulnes*. Indeed, Havelock Ellis' introduction to the English version of the novel is almost entirely based on Rivière's preface.

to meet the grandparents of his friend, Seurel. Meaulnes becomes lost, and after wandering for a day and a night in the forest, he comes across a driveway where the dust has been swept in "great regular circles, as it was swept at his home before holidays." He follows the road, and comes to a half-ruined manor. Lanterns have been hung in the gaping windows, and peasants and children, wearing the costumes of three generations ago, are dining on long trestle-tables. Meaulnes learns from one of the guests that the son of the house, a headstrong and fanciful young man, is bringing home his fiancée, and this celebration has been arranged to please the young couple. The next day, the guests go for a boatride on the lake, although it is winter, and Meaulnes is placed next to a beautiful girl whom he discovers to be the sister of the young man. But the boatride ends, and still the guests of honor have not appeared. Finally the young man arrives alone. His fiancée has refused to come with him. The party breaks up, and in the confusion, Meaulnes is unable to say goodbye to his new friend. A farmer offers to drive him part of the way back, Meaulnes accepts, falls asleep, and when he returns to the school, he is unable to find out where he has been. The efforts of Meaulnes and Seurel to rediscover the "lost château" where the young girl lives form the chief part of the story.

That is roughly the plot of *Le Grand Meaulnes,* but a summary cannot convey the quality of the book. Fournier, like Flaubert, seems to have tested his prose by reading it aloud; in any case, it possesses a music and a simplicity which recall *St. Julien l'Hospitalier;* it is at once mysterious and sober. The small town, the school of Ste. Agathe and the surrounding countryside are described with the liveliness and the fidelity of things long known; and yet in the very process of being described they are somehow transformed by hints and premonitions of events to come. Fournier once said that he meant to "insert the marvellous into reality," and in *Le Grand Meaulnes* the commonplace and the strange are inextricably mixed. The fight in the snow at night, directed by the gypsy with the bandaged head, nevertheless remains a fight among schoolboys who can be recognized "by

their muffled voices and their manner of attacking." And the most fantastic episodes become credible through the sharpness of his observations. Fournier knows how to evoke the sight and smell of a place by a few precise details: the classroom in winter, with the odor of "herrings frying on the stove, and of the singed wool of those, who on coming in, had warmed themselves too close." His account of the amusements at school. the excitement of the boys at the prospect of driving to the station for Seurel's grandparents, Seurel's initial feeling of pleasure when the classroom is used as a laundry ("at the first moment—I was still so young —I considered this novelty as a holiday") makes us understand, better than any explanations could, how restricted and uneventful life in the village was. And constantly, though Fournier uses only simple, concrete words, he manages to suggest something more intangible: solitude, the wonder which children feel at an icy morning. He speaks of the students arriving at school with eyes "still dazzled from having crossed fields of hoar-frost, from looking on frozen ponds, and thickets from which hares ran"; or of the winter landscape through which Meaulnes drove: "Once more it was the vast frozen countryside, without incident or distraction; only from time to time a magpie, frightened by the cart, would fly up, to perch farther off on a headless elm." In all these descriptions, there is an awareness of the mystery which underlies commonplace happenings.

It is perhaps this feeling of mystery, that all created things whether great or small are worthy of interest, which enables Fournier to make so prosaic a figure as the "methodical housewife" Millie so charming. He shows us Millie trying on her made-over hat with a mixture of coquetry and self-consciousness; or even while she is inspecting the new house and complaining that their furniture will never fit, gently wiping the grimy face of her little boy. But it is in the understanding of children that he excells. He has caught the very mood of youth, the restlessness, the anxiety, the tremendous hopes and the melancholy of that period when "we believed that happiness was near, and that one had but to set forth in order to find it." Seurel, with his hero-

worship of his older friend; Meaulnes himself, proud and solitary, unable to keep from wounding the girl he loves,—almost as a precaution,—because he cannot believe that joy will last, have been drawn from first-hand experience. Even when he is at the height of his fortune, Meaulnes is incapable of trusting in his good luck. "Meaulnes felt in himself that slight anguish which seizes you at the end of too-happy days." Beneath his rejoicing, he has always a sense of guilt; an uninvited guest at the celebration, he thinks: " 'All the same, there must be people in the world who would forgive me.' And he imagines old people, grandparents who are convinced beforehand that everything you do is good." Yet he and Seurel, in between their planning and their disappointments, are still young enough to play violent games in the courtyard, and to enjoy mystery for its own sake. " 'Be my friends,' said the gypsy. He added . . . 'Swear that you will answer when I call you—when I call you this way' (and he let out a strange sort of cry: Hoo-oo!) 'Meaulnes, you swear first!' And we swore, for like the children that we were, everything that was more serious and solemn than usual delighted us."

Fournier's work grows out of the impressionist-symbolist tradition. I have used the two words together, because symbolism and impressionism were overlapping tendencies. It was not, however, the symbolist masters, Rimbaud, Verlaine and Mallarmé, who made the deepest impression on Fournier, though he was later to know and admire their poetry; it was rather the lesser poets, Laforgue, Jammes and Henri de Regnier, who awakened his literary enthusiasm. While he was in school he wrote a number of pieces in the symbolist manner, and was accordingly cast down when Gide remarked that it was "no longer the moment to write prose poems." Yet Fournier later became dissatisfied with symbolism. Many of its devices seemed to him obscure or artificial. For example, in *Pelléas and Mélisande*, Maeterlinck, in order to give Mélisande an otherworldly quality, has her say that she does not know where she comes from. Fournier would not have used such a mechanical device. Whatever mystery he suggests must arise by inference rather than by statement, and in

natural surroundings. Besides this, symbolism did not always harmonize with his belief in simplicity of style, and his interest in humble people. The novel *Marie Claire*, by Marguerite Audoux, with its grave majestic peasants, gave him the impetus he needed to start off in another direction. But his style never lost the imprint of symbolism; his later work realizes his aim at nineteen when he confided to his friend Rivière: "For the time being, I would rather follow Laforgue, but in writing *a novel*. That's contradictory; it would no longer be so if one presented life with its characters, and the novel with its characters, as only dreams which meet."

In some respects *Le Grand Meaulnes* resembles Kafka's fantasy, *The Castle*. Both are allegories. *The Castle* is an allegorical account of the search for heaven, and *Le Grand Meaulnes* of the search for happiness. In both of them, there is the same combination of dream-like vision and everyday detail. But there the resemblance ceases. In *Le Grand Meaulnes*, most of the action is initiated by the characters; whereas in *The Castle* the characters submit to the action; they move about in a state of uneasy somnambulism. But the chief difference between the two books lies in the way the allegory is handled. In *The Castle* the allegory is much more open, and the characters, because they are symbols, are not fully developed. Meaulnes and Seurel, on the contrary, are living people, and the fantastic adventures in which they are engaged in no way alter their basic reality. In this connection it is interesting to read what Fournier wrote about Ibsen's *Master Builder*. "I should like the simple life of the characters, and that of the symbols to be more mixed. I should like their lives to be symbolical, and not them."

Fournier was, as we may guess from this, a conscious craftsman. Though he thought too much anaylsis was bad for writing ("All things have only been known to me by the impression they have left on my heart. Therefore I have not tried to distinguish them") yet from the first he had a clear conception of what he should work for in art. To his friend, Jacques Rivière, who, worried because Fournier had always liked simple, touch-

ing stories, had warned him against falling into sentimentality, Fournier replied, "I think that sentimentality is above all sloppy writing—doing things too fast, in the easy way." And Fournier was right. His adolescents are not sentimental because he knows too much about them. By the time he was twenty, he had decided: "My credo in art:—childhood. To be able to reproduce it without any childishness, with its depth which touches mysteries. My future book will be perhaps an imperceptible perpetual shifting back and forth between dream and reality—"dream" understood as the immense and imprecise childish life hovering over the other, and ceaselessly put into motion by echoes of the first." For him, fantasy is a method of arriving at truth. Realism, in excluding emotions and associations, and limiting itself to describing an external reality which is the same for everybody, can only express a partial truth. "I don't see how we ever could have been taken in by such a crude theory." Just as we feel Poe's *Tales* to be true, in spite of their supernatural elements, because they depict the horror of which the human mind is capable, so the strange adventure which befell Meaulnes is a true account, though not a literal one, of the pride and longing of youth.

Fournier gives this indication of his aim in writing: "It is . . . of that world at the same time past and desired, mysteriously mingled with the world of my life, mysteriously suggested by it, that I wish to speak. . . . Nevertheless, I do not think that it is the sole mystery of one will, one divinity, but rather of a life remembered with my past life, of a landscape which the actual landscape makes me desire. I shan't find, like Gide, words on the actual landscape which suggest the mystery, instead I'll describe *the other mysterious landscape.*"

"The other landscape"—the phrase is characteristic. There is through all Fournier's writing a feeling of homesickness for some other place, and a consciousness, even in joyful moments, of the shortness of joy, which transforms the fields, houses and people that Fournier describes, giving them a heightened intensity and poignance. Another young man felt the same nostalgia:

"Aye, in the very temple of Delight
Veiled Melancholy hath her sov'reign shrine . . ."

Evidently Fournier recognized their kinship, for he said, in a letter to Rivière, "You understand, my book is the story by Keats: *'Certain of them met Antigone in another existence, and no human love will be able to satisfy them'*." As well as this nostalgia, there is the counter feeling that everything is possible, that the lost manor can be found, that the student has only to tell the young châtelaine his love and she will accept him. It is the intensity of emotion behind Fournier's descriptions, rather than the descriptions, in themselves direct and realistic, which gives the landscape its immaterial, dreamlike quality.

As, according to Fournier, the dream has its basis in reality, so *Le Grand Meaulnes* is based on Fournier's experience. His father, like Seurel's, was a school teacher, his uncle Florent kept a store in Nançay like Uncle Florentin in the book, the country he describes is the country of his childhood. And the unknown beloved whom Fournier called "Slender Waist" served as his model for Yvonne de Galais, the young mistress of the manor; her dress, her appearance and the few words they exchanged all tally with the dress, appearance and words of the real girl. Fournier met the real girl in a park, and though she was reserved, and probably of a higher social position than he, he managed to engage her in conversation. He tells of their meeting in a letter to Rivière: "It would not be enough to call her 'elegant.' Purity is the word which suits her best, her dress, her great chestnut-colored coat, her body which I have never imagined, as well as her face. . . . Our encounter was extraordinarily mysterious. 'Ah'! we said, 'we know each other better than if we knew who the other was.' And it was strangely true. She said, 'We are children; we have done a foolish thing.' So great was her candor and our happiness that one could not have guessed what foolish thing she meant: not a word of love had yet been spoken." They saw each other several times, then she disappeared, and when finally after many efforts he discovered her address, it was only to learn with despair that she had since been married. Though Fournier fell

in love again, to the end of his life he believed that she was the only woman who could have made him happy.

Fournier's attitude toward women was a curious one. It is certainly not usual for a young man to spend so many years longing for someone he knows to be unobtainable. But the social conventions of that period made it difficult for a young man to know any respectable girl at all well; moreover his family was not rich, so in all probability the girls he could have had were not of an education or a class to have satisfied him. He gives some hint of this when he exclaims: "I hope with all my heart that 'Slender Waist' is poor!" But besides this, there was in Fournier's character a fastidiousness, coupled with an inability to overlook faults in those he loved, which must have made him hard to please for long. In a letter to his sister Isabelle, writing about the poet Laforgue, he remarks: "He loved a girl, he had loved girls . . . and yet when the moment came to tell his love he could not forget all the silly things they say, and which She might have said. . . . His irony came from hiding his emotion. . . . It seems to me I know him like a brother." Rivière later wrote about him in words which would have applied equally well to Meaulnes: "For Fournier, the moment of the most complete privation is also the moment of interior fulfillment. His suffering, which is real, should not deceive us. Fournier only finds himself and his powers in the moment when he feels empty of everything which he needs. He feels seized at once with despair and audacity; instead of resigning anything, he requires everything. Knowing perfectly well that he will not obtain it, he demands a treasure, which is his due." It is difficult not to suspect that Fournier fell in love with Slender Waist precisely because she was unobtainable, and he therefore ran no risk of disillusionment.

What is Fournier's place in literature? It is hard to judge any writer who has been cut off before maturity; one must guard against either overestimating him because of his tragic death, or judging his work as one would judge the work of a man of fifty. *Miracles,* having been written before *Le Grand Meaulnes,* is of little use in helping us to determine what Fournier's later books

would have been like. It does show, however, that in spite of his sensitivity and obvious literary gifts, poetry was not Fournier's most congenial medium. The stories included, notably *Le Miracle des Dames du Village*, and *Le Miracle de la Fermière*, (both of which had appeared in magazines during the author's lifetime), succeed far better, being written in that simple yet magical style which Fournier was to perfect in his novel. But the evidence of *Le Grand Meaulnes* itself, the mastery of its prose and its psychological insight, proves that his talent was no flash in the pan. Fournier has not the range of a Flaubert or a Hugo; he may be more justly compared to a writer like Poe whose field was narrower but whose genius was no less real. It is certain that as an interpreter of youth, of the sadness and hopes and wonder of childhood, Fournier has few rivals. He has the vision of a poet, and the impartiality of those medieval illuminators of Books of Hours who show peasants binding sheaves, and the Virgin in the clouds above them, both with the same air of miraculous bright clarity.

About The Contributors

☆ The poems and criticism of JOHN BERRYMAN have been printed in many literary magazines, and in one of the Five Younger Poets series of New Directions. ☆ FREDRIKA BLAIR is a young writer now living in Washington. This is her first critical article to appear in print. ☆ LT. CECIL HEMLEY has recently left this country for overseas duty with the Army. ☆ MARIA JOLAS lived in France for many years. An assistant to her husband, Eugene Jolas, she translated many French writers for *Transition*. Several of her translations will appear in an edition of French short stories to be brought out this fall. ☆ JEAN-PAUL SARTRE, who was active in the resistance movement, is one of the foremost of younger French writers. He is known as a novelist, philosopher and dramatist, and his current extraordinary play "Huis-Clos" is having a tremendous success in France. *The Wall*, printed in French as *Le Mur*, comes from a book of short stories of that name printed before the war. ☆ LT. ROGER SHATTUCK is now a pilot in the Southwest Pacific. ☆ SGT. PETER VIERECK is in the Psychological Warfare Branch of the Army, and has been stationed for some time in Rome. ☆ Now an assistant professor of English at the University of Kansas City, H. H. WAGGONER is at work on a book on twentieth century English and American poetry.